

Libri Nigromantici:

The Good, the Bad, and the Ambiguous in John of Morigny's *Flowers of Heavenly Teaching*

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Soon after his conversion away from the nefarious art of necromancy (having been rescued by a divine voice while fashioning the fourth of the “four rings of Solomon”), John of Morigny describes a vision of Mary:

It seemed to me that I was in the great church of the blessed Mary at Chartres, in front of the main altar of the church, and I was petitioning the glorious Virgin there. And when I had been asking for a little while, lo, the silver image, having been transformed carnally and corporeally into the selfsame Virgin, descended from the altar and came to me. Taking me by the hand, she led me to the middle of the steps in front of the altar and said to me, “Stand here, and worship God, and give Him thanks.” And though I was going to pray with the common prayers, the blessed Virgin said “No, this way: Gracias ago tibi.” And when I was there with knees bent and hands clasped, the whole choir was singing “Te Deum laudamus” because of the miracle that the blessed virgin Mary had fashioned in my person in the sight of all.

While they were singing, I meditated in my heart and said, “Mary, if books of that most nefarious art of necromancy are discovered to belong to me, will it be said that this is no miracle, but by means of that art that I made your image descend and change? And what shall I do with the books of this knowledge? Shall I remove and hide them from my colleagues?” While I was thinking these things over, I woke up. And in memory of this vision I composed the prayer *Gloriose flos celorum*, and the other that follows it, *Gratias tibi ago*.¹

1. Videbatur enim mihi quod eram in ecclesia magna Carnocensi beate Marie ante magnum altare ipsius ecclesie, et rogabam ibi Virginem gloriosam. Et cum aliquantulum rogassem eam, ecce, ymago argentea, in ipsa Virgine carnaliter et corporaliter transmutata, desuper descendit de altari et venit ad me, accipiens me per manus et duxit me per medium gradus ante altare, et dixit mihi, “Hic sta, et Deum adora, et redde ei gratias.” Et cum voluissem orare orationibus communibus, beata Virgo dixit

This account of redemption from necromancy parallels many medieval *exempla* of magicians, necromancers, and sorcerers' apprentices who traffic with demons and are either divinely punished or divinely redeemed. The best known of these tales may have been the story of Theophilus, a bishop who sold his soul to the devil for a preferment; the pact with the devil, implemented through a magician, was snatched back by the virgin Mary, who returned it to a penitent Theophilus to be burnt. The story of Theophilus was well known to John, who quotes it and refers to it regularly in his prayers.

However, John's account offers some twists on the Theophilus theme. First, unusually for an exemplary penitent, John is worried that if his Benedictine colleagues discover his necromantic books, they might decide that the apparitions of the Virgin he has been reporting to them, the miraculous speaking statues and moving images, were necromantically contrived. Through this comment we may glimpse the extent to which John's magical activities have accompanied his long-standing conversation with the Virgin; the apparitions of the Virgin are not, clearly, a reward for his repentance; indeed, if anything the reverse is true: ritual wrongdoing is quite likely to bring on a divine apparition to warn him away from the practice.

Second, nowhere in the standard *exempla* do we find the necromancer wondering in this way about what to do with the books of necromancy he still has in his house. In the story of Theophilus, the material equivalent of the necromantic books is the pact with the devil, which is quickly burnt once retrieved from the devil's hands. By contrast we never actually find out what happens to John's books; unlike Prospero, he makes no declaration about

"Non, set sic: Gracias ago tibi." Et cum fuisset ibi, genibus flexis, manibus conplocis, omnis chorus cantabat "Te deum laudamus" propter miraculum quod in persona mea fecerat beata virgo Maria et in conspectu omnium. Et dum cantabant, ego cogitavi in corde meo, et dicebam, "Maria, si libri istius artis nephandissime nigromantie apud me invenientur, dicetur quod hoc non esset miraculum set per artem illam feci ymaginem ita descendere et transmutare? Et quid faciam libris istius sciencie? De societate mea remouebo et abscondam?" Et dum hec cogitarem euigilaui, et in memoriam illius visionis orationem illam composui "Gloriose flos celorum" et aliam que sequitur "Gratias tibi ago."

The Book of Visions is the first part or book of John's three part work *Liber florum celestis doctrine* (circa 1301–15). An edition of the full text is in preparation by me and Nicholas Watson. An earlier edition of the *Book of Visions* (we then called it the "Prologue", as we were treating "Liber Visionum" as a title for the whole work) was published by us in *Esoterica* 3 (2001): 108–217. Quotations here are sometimes modified from that edition. This quotation may be found on p. 186 (section 26) of the *Esoterica* edition (hereafter EE). In the structural schema of the new edition (hereafter NE) it is section I.ii.1.

destroying them. We do know from an earlier part of his narrative that among these books is one he has been writing himself, a *nova nigromantia*.² The Virgin, wisely it seems, offers no advice here; for if it is difficult to reclaim a pact with the devil, it may be even more difficult to convince an author to dispose of a book in which he has invested his intellectual labor.

I do not mean to reflect in one way or another on the quality of John's repentance over his forays into *nigromantia*; indeed there are many reasons to think that he was a true penitent; but the process of redemption, like the process of knowledge of any kind, is complicated and may take unexpected twists and turns. All knowledge, but especially difficult knowledge, becomes integrated into personal history and memory in ways that cannot simply be excised. So in this case the necromantic books appear as a kind of dream metonymy for all the knowledge they contain—a knowledge that flows through and around every node of John's story, permeating his visions, which, in turn, inform his adaptations of the books he reads and writes. The question I want to address here is how John's use of *nigromantia*—a vehemently prohibited art—might have influenced or been reinterpreted through the construction of John's own redemptive and sacral art of knowledge, the *Liber florum celestis doctrine*.

It is a delicate matter to look at the way ideas or modes of operating drawn from *nigromantia* may have influenced John's book, for in fact he denies that there is any influence or similarity at all; nevertheless there is a certain amount of evidence that deserves further consideration. In fact, John's story opens with the discovery of a necromantic book some time earlier. John had been a Benedictine for about four years, when, as he tells us, he obtained an interesting book from a certain cleric,

in which there were contained many nefarious things of the necromantic art. I copied as much as I could get from it, and after that I returned it to the cleric. I was noticed by the devil, and tempted, and blinded as the temptation prevailed, I began to think how I might be able to attain to the perfection of this nefarious knowledge. I sought counsel about this from a certain Lombard medical expert named Jacob of Bologna. When I had consulted with him, he said to me: "Get permission to use the school library, and when you have obtained it look for a certain book called the *Ars notoria*, and in that way you will discover the truth not only of this form of knowledge from which you seek information, but of all of the sciences."³

2. EE, 186 (24–25); NE I.i.12.

3. Delatus fuit michi quidam liber a quodam clerico in quo multa nephanda nigromantie artis continebantur. Et de illo quantum potui habui copiam et postea clerico

It is only after pursuing at length the apparently sacred liturgy of the *Notory art*, with its beautiful and holy images and gracious promise of angelic knowledge, and finding it corrupted by demons, that John returns to his books of nefarious necromancy.

The *Ars notoria* was clearly important to John despite the demonic forces it stirred up; indeed it was obviously far more spiritually and informationally important to the concept and prayer system of the *Liber florum* than any specific book of *nigromantia*. His relation to the *Notory art* is extensively documented in the first part of the *Liber florum*, the Book of Visions, where he describes his use of it at length. Later, John writes of plundering the *Ars notoria* “as the Hebrews plundered the Egyptian treasure”; and bits and pieces of prayers from the *Notory art* are echoed throughout his own Book of Prayers. Because of this extensive documentation about the *Notory art* in John’s visionary autobiography, as compared to the scant two chapters given to *nigromantia*, John’s book has very reasonably been mined by historians of medieval magic more for what it can tell us about the former than the latter.⁴ Yet it seems worth noting that the original book of nefarious necromancy probably never left John’s chamber; and the two chapters devoted to the “Four Rings of Solomon” in the *Liber Visionum* do not tell the whole story of John’s involvement with other kinds of magic. John’s use and possession of necromantic books, too, has consequences elsewhere in the *Liber florum*,

redidi. Et perscrutatus a dyabolo et temptatus, et temptatione preualente cecatus, cepi cogitare qualiter ad perfectionem illius sciencie nepharie attingere potuissem. Et a quodam Lambardo nomine Iacobo de Bononia, medico experto, de hoc consilium quesui. Qui cum ipsum consulerem dixit michi, “Petas licenciam studia frequentandi, et cum obtinueris quere quoddam librum qui *Ars notoria* nuncupatur. Et illo non solum de hac sciencia de qua queritur set de omnibus inuenies veritatem.” EE, 173 (section 11); NE I.i.12. The fact that Jacob comes from Bologna is recorded only in manuscripts unknown to us at the time EE was published.

4. Inevitably, since our edition of the *Liber visionum in Esoterica* has been the only part of John’s work made publically available. Much of the information on which I am about to draw comes from our edition in preparation of the Old and New Compilation Books of Figures, based in manuscripts undiscovered by us at the time of editing EE. For writing on John in connection with the *Ars notoria*, and meditations on the comment about “plundering the Egyptian treasure,” see my article in *Conjuring Spirits*, 216–49. Julien Véronèse has also used John of Morigny as a point of reference in his work on the *Notory art*, and in fact a reference to John’s work opens the introduction to his book, *L’ars notoria au Moyen Âge : Introduction et édition critique* (Florence: Sismel, 2007), hereafter *L’ars notoria BOOK*. I will also be citing the dissertation, *L’Ars notoria au Moyen Âge et à l’époque moderne. Étude d’une tradition de magie théurgique (XIIe–XVIIe siècle)* Université Paris X—Nanterre (2004), hereafter *L’ars notoria DISS*.

and there is reason to look more closely at the entire work for what it can tell us not only about *nigromantia*, but more broadly about fourteenth-century knowledge categories. In this essay I aim to assemble the evidence available in the *Liber florum* for what *nigromancia* meant to John, and at the same time to use John's work to refract the status of *nigromantia* in the broader intellectual culture that was his *habitus*.

NIGROMANCIA IN UTRAQUE SPECIE

At one point, John tells us that he learned all the liberal and magic arts from the *Ars notoria*, including *nigromancia* "in both kinds."⁵ The general intellectual background for a dual sense of *nigromancia* that became available to late medieval *literati* has been laid out in a key article by Charles Burnett on "Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts."⁶ Burnett charts uses of *nigromancia* in works by Petrus Alphonsi and Gundassalinus, among others, to label a seemingly benign or at least not necessarily very bad form of knowledge, a necromancy that could be understood as philosophical or scientific rather than diabolic. Burnett notes as well that *nigromantia* was used to translate *sihr*, the Arabic word for magic⁷ (it occurs in this more or less neutral sense in *Picatrix* for example), and the positivized idea of magic that can be found in Arabic esoteric sources added a new possible range of connotations to the understanding of *nigromantia* in late medieval Latin writing. At the same time the normal definition of necromancy as a dark and demonic practice (inflected through the classical sense, divination by the dead) continued to be operative. As the number of available types of magic texts increased, there was also increased controversy about distinguishing exactly where one kind of *nigromantia* left off and the other began. Could any *soi-disant* magical practice (or any practice identified as *nigromancia*) really be benign? While some might acknowledge the idea of a more or less benign *nigromantia* in principle, it was in practice quite difficult to defend many of the actual texts circulating that contained instructions for making astrological images.

Because of this difficulty, it was not uncommon among intellectuals to shy away from suggesting that there was any genuinely licit kind of *nigromantia*, but nevertheless to distinguish between strongly (or mortally) sinful kinds, which involved explicit pacts with demons, and more ambiguous, weakly (or venially) sinful kinds, which might involve questionable use of signs or fig-

5. *Book of Visions* EE, 181 (section 20); NE I.i.10.a

6. Burnett "Talismans: Magic as Science? Necromancy among the Seven Liberal Arts," in *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996).

7. *Ibid.*, 3.

ures, but not invoke demons explicitly. An important touchstone for this array of distinctions is found in the *Speculum astronomie*, an important mid-thirteenth-century catalogue of texts whose author was concerned to lay out principles for distinguishing between licit and illicit forms of image magic. The Magister Speculi divided texts into those that explicitly invoked spirits (abominable), those that might use characters and unknown names but did not explicitly invoke spirits (less abominable but still detestable), and those that worked naturally (this ended up being a very small category indeed). Nicolas Weill-Parot has noted that the first two categories are distinguished by what he terms an “addressative” element,⁸ and I follow him in seeing this as a useful term of art to cover the primary index that distinguished magical texts and practices as objectionable.⁹ Weill-Parot goes on to note a further distinction that could be made by medieval authors between the “implicitly” and “explicitly” addressative.¹⁰ This distinction is important in that it allows us to grasp the way intentionality operated in dividing mortally and venially sinful magical practices; it also helps in separating out from intentional exorcistic necromancy the Augustinian logic by which the use of signifying elements which are not explicitly or obviously addressed to anyone at all (as abstract figures, *vores magice*, or the jumbles of sounds sometimes occurring in charms) may nonetheless be characterized as involving a demonic agreement or “pact.” In order to get a better view of the way this notion of a median, questionable, but not mortally sinful type of magic, is consistent

8. On this and the philosophical discussions around image magic generally see the extensive treatment by Nicolas Weill-Parot, *Les “images astrologiques” au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002). Chapter 1, concerning the *Speculum astronomie*, is especially important in delimiting the terms of art now in use; a shorter article on these themes by Weill-Parot is available in English, “Astral Magic and Intellectual Changes (Twelfth–Fifteenth Centuries): ‘Astrological Images’ and the concept of ‘Addressative’ Magic,” in Jan Bremmer and Jan Veenstra, *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 167–84. The *Speculum* is available in an edition by Paola Zambelli et al., *The Speculum astronomiae and its Enigma: Astrology, Theology, and Science in Albertus Magnus and His Contemporaries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), though the attribution to Albertus Magnus is in dispute; see discussion in Weill-Parot, “*Images astrologiques*,” 27–32.

9. While it might be objected that standard prayers and liturgies are also “addressative,” Weill-Parot attempts to clarify the ground of his terminology when he writes, “from a theological point of view, any ‘addressativity’ occurring outside the divine order and framework of the Church was condemned as demoniac: the Christian church had a monopoly on ‘addressativity’” (“The concept of ‘Addressative’ Magic,” 169).

10. *Ibid.*, 175.

across an array of different medieval disciplines and cultural *habitus*, I want to briefly draw out the sense of the passage from Thomas Aquinas clarifying an earlier, more ambiguous notion of demonic “pact” that arises from St. Augustine. Thomas does this by breaking the idea of pact into two branches, “tacit” and “explicit.”

Briefly, in several frequently quoted sentences from *De doctrina Christiana*, Augustine suggests that *all* superstitious signs, whether or not they involve explicit or knowing demonic commerce, or summon demons intentionally, actually rest on a kind of “pact” or agreement with demons; for example, he writes: “And so all arts of this kind, whether of trifling or harmful superstition, from a certain diseased association of humans and demons, a pact, so to speak, constituted of faithless and guileful friendship, are thoroughly to be repudiated and fled by the Christian.”¹¹ This notion that any superstitious signs involved a “pact” or agreement with demons was absorbed early into the encyclopedic literature on magic, reappearing in canon law collections by Burchard of Worms, Ivo of Chartres, and Gratian.¹² However, the idea of demonic “pact” here has little to do with the notion of a legal pact that became common later in the literature on *maleficium*, nor even the signed legal document that was returned to Theophilus by the Virgin. Rather, it is rooted in Augustine’s sign theory: for him, all language implicitly rests on a kind of “pact” or agreement between the people that use that language—an agreement that language shall be used for certain purposes, and that certain words shall mean certain things. From Augustine’s perspective, magical effects always depended on the interception of signs by demons, and hence became the basis of a linguistic “pact” between demons and the human beings who chose to use such signs; but this did not mean that humans were in fact contacting the demons intentionally, or bonded with demons in a knowing or fully complicit sense.

Thomas Aquinas, however, noticing that the “pact” spoken of by Augustine in this context does not refer to an intentional pact or legal-style contract with demons (which was also understood to exist, even by Augustine) puts a

11. Omnes igitur artes huiusmodi vel nugatoriae vel noxiae superstitionis, ex quadam pestifera societate hominum et daemonum, quasi pacta infidelis et dolosae amicitiae constituta, penitus sunt repudianda et fugienda Christiano; *De doctrina Christiana* 2.23.36, PL 34.

12. I offer a fuller account of Augustine’s influence on the natural and legal ideas of magic in my article on “Magic” forthcoming in the *Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* (2013).

refinement on the category.¹³ For Thomas, *nigromantia* refers only to magic that involves a clear, open, explicit, commerce with demons, intentionally invoked, bound, and dismissed. He distinguishes this both from astral images and the *Ars notoria*, which he treats in separate but contiguous sections of the *Summa Theologiae* (II^a II^{ae}: *nigromantia* is discussed under “divination” in Q. 95 and the *Ars notoria* is discussed under “observances” in Q. 96, where he also talks about astral images).¹⁴ In Q. 95, article 1, Thomas says that while there are many subspecies of divination, there are three overarching divisions or types: one type of divination is that done by open invocation of demons, to which he gives the general term “nigromantia” (subsuming classical necromancy with any more current practices of invoking demons), and two are done without open invocation of demons, including what he calls “augury” and “lots.”¹⁵ While he does not refer to “tacit” pact here, it is already implicit in this article that, for Thomas, divination that does not openly or consciously summon demons does not come under the rubric of *nigromantia*.

Thomas goes on to say more about the distinction between tacit and explicit demonic commerce in treating the questions on the natural power of image magic in article 2 of Q. 96. Here he argues that artificial shape is not a principal of natural action, since its immediate cause is the conception of the artificer; hence, artificial forms cannot obtain power from the stars the

13. Weill-Parot comments on the Thomistic passages I am about to quote here in “The concept of ‘Addressative’ Magic,” 175 (he notes it as one of the parameters he uses to date the work of the Magister Speculi since it involves an early use of the term “astrological image”); however he does not comment on how Thomas here is reacting to a problem with the Augustinian terminology.

14. For another discussion of Thomas’s influence on the later traditions of condemnation of the *Notory art*, see Julien Véronèse, Dissertation II.6, “Condemnations Doctrinales de L’ars Notoria”; his discussion is extremely useful though it treats Thomas as “fixing the norm” for the terms of condemnation, which I am not sure is entirely true, even though lots of writers do follow Thomas. Véronèse does not bring in Hartlieb.

15. Thomas’s use of these terms “augury” and “lots” are distinctive; he is not following Isidore’s lead as he appears to be elsewhere in this article, but rather subsumes a number of non-traditional subcategories in these two types. In the category of “augury” Thomas indicates that he means to include divinations in which someone reads the future in the disposition or movement of natural things (stars in astrology, birds in augury and so on); in “lots” or “sortes” he means to include divinations in which someone performs an action to find out something hidden (this would include practices such as casting dice, drawing lots, geomancy and other allied actions including in fact trial by ordeal). *Summa Theologiae*, II^a II^{ae}, Q. 95 A. 3.

way naturally made things do. On demonic involvement in astral magic, Thomas says

the sign of this [demonic involvement] is that it is necessary that certain characters be inscribed on [the images], which do not operate naturally at all; for a figure cannot be a cause of natural action. But in this respect astrological images do differ from necromantic ones: in necromantic images there are expressed certain invocations and magic signs [*praestigia*] which pertain to *explicit demonic pact*; but in the other images there are *tacit pacts*, through certain signs of figures or characters.¹⁶ (My emphasis.)

In this passage, Thomas offers a philosophical way of distinguishing image magic texts along the same lines as does the *Magister Speculi*: he divides astral images into those which involve “explicit” invocations and those involving what he calls “tacit pacts” through cryptic signs. Though both types are called *nigromantia* by the *Magister Speculi*, Thomas uses *nigromancia* to cover *only* those practices where demons are being summoned intentionally and *explicitly*; yet all the practices he discusses here are understood to be essentially illicit; they are all addressative, and correspond roughly to categories of abominable and detestable.

I do not want to suggest here that John of Morigny was familiar with the idea of “tacit pact” in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*; my point is simply that a common set of distinctions underlies the writings of Thomas Aquinas (speculative philosopher), the *Magister Speculi* (natural philosopher), and John of Morigny (liturgist). As will shortly be seen, it is found in the *Ars notoria* as well. In this triple set of distinctions, there is not only the major watershed that exists between illicit (addressative) and licit (nonaddressative) forms of astrological magic, but also another smaller watershed between mortally sinful *nigromantia* that involved intentional demon summoning, and a median category of magic, not ever quite confessed to be good, but also perhaps, at least in some renditions, not so bad, that involved signs and figures of a more ambiguous kind. Since it was quite difficult (perhaps impossible as Weill-Parot and others have suggested) to find actual texts which unambiguously filled all the criteria of purely natural or philosophical magic, it is the

16. Cuius signum est quod necesse est eis inscribi quosdam characteres, qui naturaliter ad nihil operantur, non enim est figura actionis naturalis principium. Sed in hoc distant astronomicae imagines a nigromanticis, quod in nigromanticis fiunt expressae invocationes et praestigia quaedam, unde pertinent ad *expressa pacta cum Daemonibus* inita, sed in aliis imaginibus sunt quaedam *tacita pacta* per quaedam figurarum seu characterum signa (II^a II^{ae} Q. 96 A.2). Quoted from the Leonine edition, online at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org>.

existence of this ambiguous and indeterminate category, the questionable, the “perhaps bad or perhaps not so bad,” which virtually guaranteed that a variety of different types of magic texts would need to be retained in the libraries of philosophically oriented magicians for further consideration and perhaps testing.

It is against this background of conceptual *gradations* of illicit magic that John of Morigny’s ongoing engagement with *nigromantia* must be seen. John’s advanced degree in canon law would have made him quite familiar with the Augustinian prohibitions against addressative magic (indeed he quotes them, via Gratian, in his New Compilation Book of Figures, part iii). It is clear from passages already quoted that he had absorbed an idea of *nigromancia* that had a dual valence. It remains an open question how he navigated the middle ground of the *nigromancia* that is perhaps less illicit, perhaps indeed not sinful in the same sense. He speaks only on that one occasion of *nigromancia in utraque specie*. Throughout the *Liber florum* elsewhere he seems to acknowledge only one form of *nigromancia*, and it is very bad indeed. Yet at the same time it is clear that his period of reading, writing, and practicing of *nigromantia* has not left the *Liber florum* untouched.

CATEGORIES OF MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE ARS NOTORIA AND THE LIBER FLORUM

The opening of the New Compilation Book of Figures, which dates the inception of the new work to the Ides of August, 1315, describes how John rewrote the third part of his book because, as he tells us, the original Book of Figures had been attacked by certain “barking dogs” at Sens. The figures (so stated the barking dogs) seemed to be composed “in the manner of necromantic figures” (*more figurarum nigromantie*), “on account of the crosses and circles in them, and on account of the consideration of planetary and daily cycles in the figures and prayers.”¹⁷

It is not clear what stance (if any) was being taken on the issue of tacit and explicit demonic pact by the barking dogs. It is possible that they were accusing John of summoning demons explicitly, but they need not have been. John does not explicitly invoke demons, though he does include a few

17. Tunc, propter hoc quia dicebant ipsas figuras more figurarum nigromantie esse compositas (propter cruces et circulos in eisdem existentes); tunc, propter hoc quia consideraciones planetarum et dierum circulorum in ipsis figuris et oracionibus proferendis constituebantur; . . . et sic quodammodo secundum istam scienciam scandalum nascebatur. New Compilation Book of Figures III.i.1; fol. 72r in London, British Library, Add. 18027.

potentially dubious addressative elements that do not make it into the New Compilation (including names of the seven planetary angels, and figures of the seven planets and the twelve houses¹⁸). Was it possible that they thought of the *Ars notoria* itself as a necromantic practice, or were condemning John's art here for its *Ars notorial* filiations? While in principle the somewhat generic description of the figures as containing "crosses and circles" might be thought applicable to the "notae" of the *Ars notoria*, I do not think it likely that the barking dogs were accusing John simply of using figures that evoked the *Ars notorial* designs, for several reasons. The first is the lack of any explicit reference to the *Ars notoria* (an absence made the more conspicuous here by contrast with the prominent foregrounding of the *Ars notoria* as the source of John's ideas in the chronicle report of the condemnation just eight years later, in 1323,¹⁹ which does not use the word "nigromancia" at all).

If the *Ars notoria* itself was known to the barking dogs, they would have been aware that it did not contain planetary images or figures. However, even if they were not, John's own confession to the use of the *Ars notoria* in the *Liber Visionum* is, after all, quite detailed. It is demonstrable that, despite his own experience with demonic entities through visions induced by the *Ars notoria*, John does not elide the *Ars notoria* with *nigromantia* conceptually. The two text types are discussed separately in his narrative, where he distinguishes the period of his involvement with necromancy from the period of his involvement with the *Ars notoria*; they are sequential, not entwined. His conversion away from the *Ars notoria* (which happens slightly earlier, at Vision 9, I.i.11) is also distinguished from his conversion away from necromancy (detailed later in visions 10 and 11, I.i.12–13).

Also, in the lengthy set of flourishes by which he condemns the evil of the *Ars notoria* at the outset of his autobiography, John never charges the *Notory art* with being in essence necromantic; he *does* suggest that it is more subtle and more deceptive than necromancy, and also that "nothing can be accomplished in necromancy without it";²⁰ however, this is a way of relating the two categories, not lumping them. Never once, in his known writings, does

18. Discussed further below, in the final section of this essay.

19. For a translation of the text of the chronicle account see Nicholas Watson, "John the Monk's *Book of Visions*" in *Conjuring Spirits*, ed. C. Fanger (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1998), 163.

20. Quia sine ipso de nigromancia aliquid exerceri non potest; set in tantum subtilior est quantum deceptor. *Liber visionum* EE, 175 (section 12); NE I.i.3.

he refer to the *Ars notoria* as a necromantic practice.²¹ Ultimately, if the barking dogs meant simply that John's figures looked like the figures of the *Ars notoria*, there is no reason for them not to have said this. The application of the term "nigromantia" to these figures would appear to have distinct implications.

While we have very limited evidence about what the Barking Dogs believed "nigromantia" to be, rather more detail is available from John himself, who makes a number of things explicit about *nigromancia* that enhance our picture of what the word meant to him, and how it related to figures. One clear feature of the category in John's work is that despite all the care and caution that wraps it round, nevertheless he understood it as an area or branch of knowledge, fitting into a larger pattern of knowable things, of arts and sciences and virtues. While the *Ars notoria* also requires knowledge, or at least a skill that is learned by study (John says that it took some time for him to learn how to make it work²²), it is primarily seen as way of opening the mind to knowledge in general, not as a branch of knowledge in any specific or curricular sense; as Benedek Láng puts it, the *Notory art* is a "meta-science."²³ It represents something both more specific and more absolute than necromancy. John seems to subsume the *Ars notoria* implicitly in the general category of "exceptive arts" (a category comprising, more or less, the traditional magic arts, of which more below), though he does not give any explicit information about where it would fit in.

On the other hand, *nigromancia* is explicitly included as a branch of (or area

21. I note here that in the prohemium to the third compilation version of John's work by an anonymous redactor, the original form of John's book is described as being "composed against the *Ars notoria* by brother John, a monk of the order of St. Benedict from Morigny, according to the will and instruction of the blessed virgin Mary, because she saw that many had perished through the same *Notory art*, which is diabolical and full of necromantic experiments" (My emphasis). (Qui liber est contra artem notoriam compositus a fratre Johanne monacho ordinis sancti Benedicti de morignaco ex voluntate et informatione beate virginis marie, quia ipsa vidit quod multi perierunt per eandem artem notoriam, que est diabolica et plena nigromanticis experimentis.), fols. 1–2, Manchester, Chetham's Library, A 4 108. This voice makes a strong contrast to John himself, who never asserts that the *Notory art* contains "necromantic experiments."

22. Omnibus alijs studijs dimissis, cepi in ipsa frequencius studere, et in tantum studui quod qualiter operari deberem sciui. *Liber visionum* EE, 178 (section 15); NE I.i.6.

23. Láng, *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2010), 165.

within) the *artes exceptivae*. Toward the end of the New Compilation we find a set of tables that includes the exceptive arts laid out in an idiosyncratic knowledge scheme owing a debt to the *Ars notoria*:²⁴

Gracie Spiritus Sancti	Artes Liberales	Artes Exceptive	Artes Mechanice
Intellectus	Gramatica	Nigromancia	lanificium
Fortitudinis	dyaletica	aeromancia	theatrica
Consilij	rethorica	pyromancia	fabrilis
Sciencie	arismetica	ciromancia	venatica
Tymoris	geometria	geomancia	agricultura
Sapientie	Astronomia	geonegia*	Medicina
Pietatis	Musica	ydromancia	nauigatio

This table, which parallels each of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit with one of the seven liberal, exceptive, and mechanical arts, is included in some form in all manuscripts containing John’s New Compilation Liber Figurarum. The liberal and mechanical arts, of course, are well known categories; the term “exceptive arts” is idiosyncratic—it does not occur outside the *Ars notoria* tradition. The term is absent from Latin dictionaries and does not occur in any *locus classicus* for the discussion of magic in the major encyclopedias or the catechetical literature. Hugh of St Victor includes a disquisition on magic arts in an appendix to the *Didascalicon*, where he discusses magic as false or unreal knowledge, “excepting” it in that sense from the order of knowledge properly speaking; but Hugh even so does not use the word “exceptive.”²⁵ Despite this lack of any external gloss or referent, however,

* This word is varyingly spelled (*geoneya*, *geonogia*, *geogonia* and so on) in manuscripts in manuscripts of the *Ars notoria* as well as of John of Morigny’s work; I use here the most common spelling found in John of Morigny manuscripts.

24. The table above occurs in all manuscripts of the New Compilation in this position in the Liber Figurarum, and in III.ii.5 in the reference system of our edition; in British Library Additional 18027 it is fol. 84r2.

25. See appendices translated by Jerome Taylor in *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor* (New York: Columbia University Pr, 1961), 152–56. I have suggested, somewhat speculatively, that this type of “exception” of magic from the order of knowledge may be behind the term “exceptive”; see my article “Sacred and Secular Knowledge Systems in the *Ars Notoria* and the *Flowers of Heavenly Teaching* of John of Morigny,” in *Die Enzyklopädik der Esoterik*, ed. Andreas Kilcher and Philipp Theisohn (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2010), 157–75. Later fifteenth-century uses of the term “exceptive arts” in texts circulating in Central Europe are documented by

the idea content of the term “exceptive arts” in John’s table is clear enough from the table itself: the category subsumes the traditional magic arts. We see that necromancy heads the exceptive arts, paralleled with intellect (in the gifts of the Holy Spirit), grammar (among the liberal arts) and weaving (among the mechanical arts). After necromancy come aeromancy, pyromancy, ciro-mancy, geomancy, geonegia, and hydromancy.

Outside the *Ars notoria* itself, the closest parallel I have seen to this categorization of magic arts in a group of seven in a way meant to parallel a standard curriculum is in a later work, a fifteenth-century *speculum principis* by Johann Hartlieb called the *Book of All Forbidden Arts*, which is arranged according to a curricular model under seven headings. The first six of these correspond to the exceptive arts in John of Morigny’s table above: necromancy, geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, pyromancy and cyromancy.²⁶ The seventh art found in Hartlieb, however, is different from the seventh exceptive art in John’s table; it is listed as “scapulomancy” (a term indicating divination conducted with bones, especially shoulder blades). John’s seventh art points us to another anomaly, another word idiosyncratic to the *Ars notoria* tradition, and again not found outside of it: the word *geonegia*.²⁷ Hartlieb’s adoption of the relatively more well-known term “scapulomancy” for the seventh art highlights the singularity and relative inscrutability of this term even to its medieval audience. Like the *artes exceptivae*, *geonegia* is conspicuous by its absence from medieval Latin dictionaries, and while John does not offer us many clues as to the content of the category, fewer still are offered in the *Ars notoria* itself, which is, if anything, even more idiosyncratic in its presentation of these arts.

Benedek Láng, *Unlocked Books*, in regard to Egidius of Corintia, pp. 33 ff, and Conrad Kyeser, pp. 76ff.

26. It is not possible to determine whether Hartlieb knew the *Liber florum* itself. On the one hand copies of John of Morigny’s work were certainly circulating in fifteenth-century Germany and Hartlieb was widely read in literature of that kind. If he was familiar with the work, however, it remains odd that it goes unmentioned here. Frank Fürbeth traces Hartlieb’s sources from Thomas Aquinas through the *Tractatus de superstitionibus* of Nicolaus Magni de Jawor, neither of which really explains Hartlieb’s curricular structure, though it is evident that Nicolaus may have had a special concern about works in the *ars notorial* tradition. See Fürbeth *Johannes Hartlieb: Untersuchungen zu Leben und Werk* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1992), 88–108. For more on magical curricula, including Hartlieb’s, see also Andreas Kilcher, “*Ars memorativa* und *ars cabalistica*: Die Kabbala in der Mnemonik der Frühen Neuzeit,” in *Seelenmaschinen*, ed. Jörg J. Berns (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2000).

27. A word found in varying spellings, as noted above; even within the same manuscripts two or more spellings may be found.

It is a singularity of the *Ars notoria* that in most manuscripts of both A and B traditions documented by Julien Véronèse, the exceptive arts are elided with the mechanical; that is, the mechanical arts are not actually listed, and instead, the *Ars notoria* includes John's seven magical arts under the heading "mechanical" or (following Hugh of St Victor) "adulterine" arts. More precisely, the *Notory art* includes six of John's magic arts: necromancy, hydromancy, pyromancy, ciromancy, geomancy, geonegia; it omits the seventh, listed as "aeromancy" in John of Morigny's work, instead using another *hapax legomenon*, "neonegia," also unknown and unrecorded elsewhere. The only clue to the meaning of either of these terms in the *Ars notoria* is that an association with astronomy is suggested for one or both of them.²⁸ It would seem from John's separation and rearrangement of these categories that he saw the *Ars notorial* list of mechanical arts as a model that he could adapt and modify to suit his needs, as others (perhaps including Johann Hartlieb?) did later.²⁹

However the model provided by the *Ars notoria* has other aspects which informed John's ideas, however creatively he may have handled them. It is notable that, according to the *Ars notoria*, *nigromancia* has two parts, one that is sinful and one that is not; from it we learn that by means of *nigromantia* "the ancient masters were accustomed to comprehend certain mysteries without sin—whence Solomon decreed that any righteous man may read five books of this art without sin."³⁰ In the gloss we get amplification:

28. In the wording of the A text, "sub astrologia" might apply to either *neonegia* or *geonogia*, though editorial punctuation attaches it to "neonegia": "mechanice autem septem sunt iste: ydromantia, pyromantia, nigromantia, cyromantia, geomantia, geonogia, sub astrologia *neonegia*" (ANA §71, Véronèse, BOOK L'Ars notoria BOOK, 58). In another B text manuscript (Kremsmünster CC 322) "sub astronomia" is applied more clearly to *geonegia*: "geonegya que continentur sub astronomia et *neonegia*" (Véronèse, BOOK L'Ars notoria DISS, textual notes to §71, 846).

29. Benedek Láng documents a couple of fifteenth-century uses of the term "exceptive arts" in Central Europe in *Unlocked Books*; see pp. 33ff for Egidius of Corintia, and 76ff for Conrad Kyser, who separates out a theurgic category that he calls the "most-sophisticated" branch of mechanical arts. Neither of these authors evidently owes a debt to John of Morigny in his conception of the *artes exceptivae*, though John's work was certainly known in Central Europe in this period; see discussion by Láng in chap. 6 (162ff).

30. Sequitur: est enim *nigromantia* quasi sacrificium animalium mortuorum, quo sine peccato quedam antiqui magistri misteria comprehendere consueverunt. Unde Salomon precepit ut .v. libros artis ejus justus aliquis sine peccato legeret, duos vero quasi sacrilegium reptaret, duo enim libri ius artis sine peccato legi non possunt. ANA §71, Véronèse, L'Ars notoria BOOK, 58.

Among the mechanical arts is one called *nigromantia* concerning which it is not licit to operate . . . on account of the sin which is done by sacrificing to malign spirits. But nevertheless Solomon said that in there are seven books in the art, of which five can be read with less sin, and through them the science of *nigromantia* can be worked. But two of them are deeply prohibited to work with. . . . And whoever offers sacrifice to demons from human blood or other bodily things offends God. . . . Because of this, these two books are specially prohibited, and although there may be sin in working with those in which there is no need to perform a sacrifice, yet there is less sin in these than the others—but I will skip over how to work with the five books concerning which there is no great sin . . . because concerning that knowledge it is not good to mention it to anyone, and especially in this book in which there are pure and mysterious things of God.³¹

In his discussion of necromancy as a liberal art, Charles Burnett makes note of a similar bifurcation in the work of Petrus Alphonsi, though Petrus speaks of nine parts, not seven; but the idea of dividing *nigromancia* into better and worse parts is the same:

First you should know that the art which is called “*nigromantia*” has nine parts. Of these, the first four of these deal with the four elements <showing> how we can operate in them physically, but the five remaining ones <show> how one cannot operate with them except through the invocation of bad spirits (“*maligni spiritus*”). These bad spirits are called devils by men.³²

31. Istarum vero mechanicarum artium est quedam que vocatur nigromantia, de qua non est licitum operari per istam artem propter peccatum quod operatur in ea, sacrificando malignis spiritibus. Sed tamen dicit Salomon quod in nigromantia sunt septem libri, quorum quinque cum minori peccato possunt legi et per eos in scientia nigromantie operari. Duo vero illorum penitus prohibentur operari, de quibus siquis operatus fuerit sacrilegium facit offerendo sacrificium spiritibus malignis, quia sine sacrificio oblato et presentato ipsis spiritibus de illis duobus libris nemo potest operari, et quicumque offert sacrificium demonibus de sanguine humano vel aliis rebus corporalibus offendit Deum et negat eum et secum irascitur mortaliter et animam suam penitus amittit nisi per penitentiam peractam eam evadat. Qua de causa prohibiti sunt illi duo libri specialiter, et quamvis peccatum sit operari de illis in quibus non est necesse sacrificari, tamen minus peccatum est quam de illis, quales vero sunt illi quinque libri de quibus non est peccatum magnum operari sine illi duo de quibus maximum peccatum est nunc omitto, quia de illa scientia non est bonum facere mentionem alicui et specialiter in libro isto in quo sunt pura et sacramenta Dei et sanctorum angelorum, . . . ANB §71 Glose; Véronèse, *L’Ars notoria BOOK*, 185.

32. Burnett, “Talismans: Magic as Science,” 4–5; the quote comes from Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*. There is a translation of the work by Irven M.

As Burnett notes, Petrus' description here seems to align with a tradition of "nigromancy according to physics" documented in Gundassalinus.³³ The *Ars notoria*, too, evidently harks to a tradition of construing necromancy as divided into more and less licit parts—an important feature to note here because it shows that the philosophical divisions we have observed in Thomas Aquinas and the Magister Speculi as well as Petrus Alfonsi, in which shades of sinfulness were mapped onto the magical tradition, were adopted and propagated similarly within the magical traditions themselves. It may be noted further that the master of the *Ars notoria* (at least the glossator of the B text) is not really less ambivalent about the "sinless" nature of the non-demonic parts of necromancy than the more philosophical and theological writers, for even though it is suggested that this branch of necromancy is not sinful, it is also stated that it is not really an appropriate thing to discuss in a work on divine mysteries such as the *Ars notoria*. Thus, the *Ars notoria* itself clearly distinguishes between ambiguous and bad necromancy, on the one hand, and its own sacramental and salvific practices, on the other. From this source, if no other were available, this triple set of distinctions would have been absorbed by John of Morigny.

Within the liturgy of John's metascience, it is also possible to see a careful gradation of relatively appropriate and inappropriate forms of magical knowledge; to understand its shadings, we must look further at the ways he breaks down the content of the exceptive arts. The magical curriculum and its correspondences delineated graphically in his table are reflected in many places in the liturgical parts of John's work, in both the New Compilation text and the old, making it clear how deeply embedded they were in John's scheme. In the Book of Thirty Prayers (which from the Old Compilation to the New changes relatively little), the exceptive arts, including *nigromantia*, surface again in the prayer for philosophy, which invokes all the Cherubim by iteration of their offices. Each office is a branch of knowledge, and the Cherubim of the exceptive arts are invoked after the mechanical arts and before the virtues, thus:

Cherubin lanificij, Cherubin theatrice, Cherubin fabrilis, Cherubin venacionis, Cherubin agriculture, Cherubin nauigacionis, *Cherubin nigromancie*, *Cherubin aeromancie*,

Resnick (Catholic University of America Pr, 2006); this passage may be found on p. 221 of the translation.

33. Burnett, *ibid.*, 4, note 13.

Cherubim phiromancie, Cherubim cyromancie, Cherubim geomancie, Cherubim geonegie, Cherubin ydromancie; Cherubin paciencie.(My emphasis)³⁴

A note in in both Old and New Compilation copies suggests, however, that for the operator, reciting the names of the Cherubim for the exceptive arts is optional, not required: “From the spot mentioning the Cherubin of weaving, the names can be omitted all the way up to “Cherubin of Patience,””³⁵ so each petitioner is left to make up his own mind whether or not to include the exceptive arts in the quest for knowledge.

Clearly there is an ambivalence around the exceptive arts that is not there for the liberal and mechanical arts. While the exceptive arts have a definite status within the order of knowledge—indeed, they have an unequivocal status as *heavenly* knowledge, part of the divine archetype, witnessed by their representation among the offices of the Cherubim—it remains a knowledge set apart from the salvific knowledge that is a functional part of the divine dispensation, legitimate and wholesome for human use. The exceptive arts are knowable, but their soteriological status is ambiguous; like the demons themselves, perhaps, they could be considered good as to origin, but not as to present action.

More information about John’s understanding of the content of the exceptive arts is offered in the Old Compilation Book of Figures, where there are descriptions of some inscriptions or “letterings”³⁶ intended to be written on a set of figures for taking all four types of knowledge listed on the table. These figures were apparently multipurpose, for though there are distinct prayers for each of the liberal, mechanical, and exceptive arts, one figure comprises a complete set of related sciences. That is, the lettering for each figure lists the allied mechanical and exceptive art, the allied gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as one of the seven planets, and one of the seven virtues. All the inscriptions also contain the name of the operator and probable scribe of this book (the operator in the case of the Old Compilation text in the Bodleian being a certain Brother Geoffrey).³⁷ The words of the inscriptions are elusive, but they do make it clear that the knowledge table above articulates

34. Book of Prayers, NE 28.6, fol. 54v in British Library Additional 18027.

35. Ibid., *Ab illo loco, Cherubin lanifici, posset nomina dimitti usque ad Cherubin paciencie.*

36. John’s word is “littera.”

37. The presence of this name shows that the book was intended to be consecrated and used, as John’s instructions require a personalized copy to be made by any potential operator.

correspondences which are stable in John's thinking from the Old to the New Compilations; for example the heading "Inscription on the figure of Grammar and the arts contained under it," is underwritten with these words:

Y e v e God Mary Spirit of *Intellect* of Geoffrey. And of *Grammar* of Saturn of Geoffrey. And of *Weaving* of Saturn of Geoffrey. And of *Necromancy* of Saturn of Geoffrey. And of *Patience* of Saturn of Geoffrey. (My emphasis)³⁸

The four types of knowledge are implicitly allied in the figure that would have contained these words, and it appears that one figure has the ability to access all the sciences across one row of correspondences in the spiritual archetype of knowledge represented in the table, in this case intellect, grammar, weaving, and necromancy. The seven virtues have been added to the set in this grouping, and patience is here included in the figure's lettering as well, all being linked to the dominion of Saturn.

As noted, each figure is to be contemplated with a prayer, different from the inscription, but likewise to be imagined in the heart, John says, not uttered with the tongue.³⁹ John gives a list of brief prayers for each liberal, mechanical, and exceptive art. The prayer for astronomy, for example, is laid out as follows:

Visualize these words for astronomy: May I understand the *Treatise on the Material Sphere*, and know Alfraganus, Arthabicius, the Toledan Tables, judgments, the astrolabe, the courses and places and natures of the planets, the twelve figures and twelve houses.⁴⁰

38. Littera figure gramatice et artium sub ea contentarum: [Y] e v e Deus Maria spiritus *intellectus* Galfridi. Et *grammatice* Saturni Galfridi. Et *lanificii* Saturni Galfridi. Et *nigromencie* Saturni Galfridi. Et *patencie* Saturni Galfridi. This is from the Old Compilation Liber figurarum, NE Old Compilation III.19.dd; fol. 64r in Oxford, Bodleian Liturg. 160.

39. . . . hec verba que sequuntur secundum suas proprietates non lingua exprimi sed in corde ymaginari uel premeditari. . . . In die quando operatus de grammatica, dum figure mentaliter ymaginantur, debet opifex in corde suo et non ore hec uerba cogitando exprimere. NE Old Compilation III.18.a; fol. 61r in Bodleian Liturg. 160.

40. Hec ymaginabis ad astronomiam: [v]ellem intelligere *Tractatum de Spera Materiali*, et scire Alfraganum, Arthabicium, tabulas Toletanas, astrolabium, indicia, cursus et loca et naturas planetarum, duodecim figurarum et duodecim domorum. NE Old Compilation III.3.18.z; fol. 62v in Bodleian Liturg. 160. The *Treatise on the Sphere* by thirteenth-century mathematician Johannes de Sacrobosco was a textbook based on Arabic commentaries on Ptolemy. Alfraganus (Al-farghani) was a ninth-century Arab astronomer who wrote a summary of Ptolemy and two treatises on astrolabes. Arthab-

Where the prayers contain lists of book or authors, as here, they give a good idea of works or authorities commonly studied in university curricula. However, the knowledge sought by the prayers is not always textual. Most often the prayers are for a mix of texts and skills, but in some, such the prayer for the mechanical art of theatre, the knowledge comprises only a more practical “how-to” knowledge:

Visualize these words for the theatrical art: May I know and understand the whole theatrical art, how to dance, to play in all sorts of ways, to fight, to leap, to drum, to caper, and to remove all tedium and melancholy through games in theatres and elsewhere.⁴¹

Like the prayers for the liberal and mechanical arts, the prayers for the *artes exceptivae* request specific subspecies of knowledge, and sometimes knowledge from specific texts. The prayers for the exceptive arts stray from the form of the other arts only in one respect: the operator asks only for theoretical knowledge; practical or working knowledge is explicitly excluded. Here is the prayer for necromancy:

For the art of necromancy, these words are dwelt upon in the heart: May I know and understand, *but not perform*, all arts of necromancy, including sacrificing, suffumigation, and auscultation.⁴² (My emphasis.)

All prayers for exceptive arts similarly request theoretical knowledge only, excluding the practical.⁴³ Yet they are represented in the figures and prayers just as they are in the table. It seems that, unlike Hugh of St. Victor, John

icius or Alcabitius (Al-Qabisi) was a tenth-century Arab astronomer whose *Introduction to Astrology* was popular in Latin. The Toledan Tables was a set of astronomical tables formulated by eleventh-century Arab astronomers in Toledo.

41. Hec ymaginabis ad artem theatricam: [V]ellem scire et intelligere omnem artem theatricam, choreare, ludere omnimodo, et debellare, saltare, tympanizare, balare, et omne tedium et malencoliam remouere per ludos in theatralibus et alibi. NE Old Compilation III.18.g; fol. 61v in Bodleian, Liturg. 160.

42. Ad artem nigromencie hec cogitantur in corde: [V]ellem scire et intelligere, sed non facere, omnes artes nigromantie, sacrificatiuam, suffumagatiuam, et auscultatiuam. NE Old Compilation III.18.d; fol. 61v in Bodleian, Liturg. 160. “Auscultative” is related to the “auscultare,” which has a common general sense of “pay attention to” or “examine” (according to Ducange). However, aside from this basic sense, I do not know what is meant by “auscultative” knowledge as it used in the magical tradition where John presumably picked it up.

43. In a seemingly analagous case, an episcopal visitation of 1500 at Sulby monastery turned up a monk who had consulted “books of experiments” but “for speculation merely and never for operation”: *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia*, ed. Gasquet

does not see the magic arts as excluded from the order of knowledge in principle, at least not wholly so, except from the vantage that something may be known but not practiced is itself a complex manner of exclusion. The exceptive arts are at any rate important enough to compose prayers for, and to place among the offices of the Cherubim. If this is exclusion, it would seem to be a different kind of exclusion from that of Hugh of St Victor.

CONTENT OF THE CATEGORY *GEONEGIA*
ACCORDING TO JOHN OF MORIGNY

The most interesting subdivision of the *artes exceptive*, because there is so little information about it anywhere else, is obviously the category of *geonegia*. In this prayer, John offers a list of texts (something he notably did *not* do in the prayer for *nigromantia*, above). For *geonegia*, he writes:

Visualize these for the geonegic art: May I know and understand (but not perform) all the arts of *geonegia*, the books concerning images by King Ptolemy, the *Book of Talismans of Abel*, the *Book of Seven Senators*, the *Book of Twelve Firmaments*, and the *Book of the Semhemforas*.⁴⁴

This is a fascinating though somewhat inscrutable grouping of works, not all of which can be identified with extant or known texts. The “books on images” attributed to Ptolemy would certainly have included the *Opus imaginum*, and perhaps also the *Centiloquium*.⁴⁵ The *Book of Talismans of Abel* can probably be identified with a work of astrological image magic also called the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel* (or “Book of Planets according to the Knowl-

(Royal Historical Society, Camden Third Series, 12), vol. 3, 117–18. I thank Richard Kieckhefer for this reference.

44. *Hec ymaginabis ad geonegiam artem*: [V]ellem scire et intelligere omnes omnes artes geonegie (sed non operari) libros de ymaginibus Tholomei Regis, *Librum Prestigiorum Abel*, *Librum de Septem Senatoribus*, *Librum de Duodecim Firmamentis*, et *Librum Semhemforas*. NE Old Compilation III.18.bb; fol. 63r in Bodleian Liturg. 160.

45. The *Centiloquium* was a book of aphorisms attributed to Ptolemy a number of which had direct relevance to the principles of image magic. On the *Opus imaginum*, see F. Carmody, *The Astronomical Works of Thabit B. Qurra* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Pr, 1960), who discusses the text on pp. 170–72. The work opens “Opus imaginum secundum consilium Ptholomei” (Carmody, 171) and the last paragraph begins “Dixit Ptholomeus: Edidi hunc librum de imaginibus super facies signorum . . .” (ibid., 172). Carmody says this work “shows essential points of comparison with *De Imaginibus*” (of Thabit); however, it is not the same but a compilation including overlapping images. It is worth noting that one version of Thabit’s *de ymaginibus*, the version translated by Adelard of Bath, also mentions Ptolemy even while ascribing the work to Thabit. Generally going by the name “Liber prestigiorum” the best manuscripts refer to a work by Thabit “secundum Ptolomeum et

edge of Abel”).⁴⁶ These works can be associated with known texts in the genre of astrological images. I cannot identify John’s *Book of Seven Senators* or *Book of Twelve Firmaments*. The final book in the list, the *Book of the Semhemforas*,⁴⁷ is well attested: this work, surviving in many copies, is a treatise on divine names that discusses methods of forming and using them. It circulated with some versions of the *Liber Razielis*. A version of the *Liber Semhemforas* is shown by Jan Veenstra to have been embedded in the mid-fourteenth-century compendium by Berengario Ganell, the *Summa Sacre Magice*.⁴⁸

Since it involves many unusual divine names, the presence of the *Book of the Semhemforas* here suggests that this is not exclusively meant as a category grouping of texts on either image magic or “natural” magic. However, at the same time, it also does not appear to be a category grouping of explicitly demonic magic. For one thing, the first two works are images of the benign sort that came under the licit heading for the Magister Speculi. As already noted, the *Book of the Semhemforas* is unquestionably addressative, but arguably non-demonic. Finally, this list omits the one work that John confesses to owning and elsewhere unambiguously identified as necromantic, the *Four Rings of Solomon*.⁴⁹ John describes working with the *Four Rings* in the period

Ermetem” (i.e., a book of talismans “in the tradition of Ptolemy and Hermes”). The Magister Speculi lists this version (identifiable by its incipit) with the “abominable” types of of necromantic magic, attribution being given to Hermes. See Charles Burnett, “The Arabic Hermes in the Works of Adelard of Bath” in *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism*, ed. Paolo Lucentini, Ilaria Parri, and Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 369–84.

46. This includes a book for each planet, of which at least two (the books of the sun and moon) circulated separately; on this see Burnett, *ibid.*, 370, and Vittoria Perrone Compagni “‘Studiosus incantationibus’: Adelardo di Bath, Ermete e Thabit,” *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 80 (2001): 36–61 (cited by Burnett, 370). On the *Liber planetarum ex scientia Abel* see also Nicolas Weill-Parot, *images astrologiques*, 493 and 792.

47. Occurring in numerous variant spellings in Latin works, *Semyforas*, *Semaphoras*, *Seminafora*, etc., all meant as approximations of Hebrew Shem ha-Meforash, preeminent name of God, which would normally refer to the Tetragrammaton; in the *Liber Sememforas* the term is evidently adopted to refer to names of God more broadly.

48. See discussion of the *Liber Semiphoras* in Jan Veenstra, “Honorius and the Sigil of God: the *Liber iuratus* in Berengario Ganell’s *Summa sacre magice*” in *Invoking Angels*, 169–72. There is a transcription by Don Karr of an early modern English *Raziel* in British Library, Sloane 3826, which includes the *Liber Semiphoras*, and is available online at <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Solomon/LibSal.pdf>.

49. For an interesting description of one version of this text, see Jean-Patrice Boudet, *Entre Science et Nigromance* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 145–46.

when he had relapsed into necromancy; indeed he had reached an advanced degree of operation before being warned off by a divine voice saying “you fool, you fool, you fool!”⁵⁰

Overall, the array of works mentioned as included in the category *geonegia*, insofar as we can know anything about it at all, seems to point to an ambiguous category of texts that are distinguished less by the absence of addressative elements than the absence of explicit and conscious demonic manipulation. Their properties cannot be understood as natural, except in the sense of being “within the divine dispensation” perhaps. Indeed, as we have seen, both *nigromancia* and *geonegia* are part of the divine archetype (for how can any knowledge available to us not be there in God?). The category called *nigromancia* is identified with the very explicit context of intentional demon conjuring, with its sacrifices and suffumigations; the category called *geonegia* compasses (perhaps among other things) works of astrological images and divine names that do not involve demons, in John’s mind, though he does not remove the ban on performance, and here as elsewhere among exceptive arts requests only theoretical knowledge, showing uncertainty about fitting application of this knowledge to worldly purposes.

We do not know what most of the actual Old Compilation figures looked like, since most of them (all but two⁵¹) are missing from our unique copy of the Old Compilation text in Oxford, Bodleian Library Liturg. 160. However, we can shade in a few aspects of those involving representational images since John gives some instructions about them. John mentions three groups of representational images, including seven figures of Mary (which rode on into the New Compilation, and are present in some New Compilation manuscripts⁵²), seven planetary figures, and twelve figures representing the twelve

50. Ego, dum quodam mane vigilarem—ut sine dubio mihi videbatur—et de lecto meo surgerem et quantum annulum Salomonis ad finem ducerem, audiui vocem ad aures meas dicentem, “Stulte et stulte et stulte!” Et admirans timui, dicens “Vere, stultus sum.” Et iterum illa vox dixit, “Vere, stultus es, et si scires quanta oportet te pati pro hijs que agis . . .” EE, 186 (section 24); NE I.i.12.

51. Images of the two surviving figures in Bodleian Library Liturg. 160 are reproduced in C. Fanger, “Covenant and the Divine Name: Revisiting the *Liber iuratus* and John of Morigny’s *Liber florum*,” in *Invoking Angels*, ed. C. Fanger (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 2012), 196–97.

52. A set of images may be seen for the copy of John’s *Liber florum* in Salzburg University Library MI 24, whose catalogue page is available online at <http://www.ubs.sbg.ac.at/sosa/handschriften/mI24.htm>. These are perhaps the most beautiful of the renderings of the Virgin in all of the John of Morigny manuscripts I have seen.

houses. The first two sets are described. Here is John's description of the seven planetary figures:

In the first, let there be made the head of a cherub with wings. In the second, let the head be womanly, crowned with a gold diadem. In the third, let there be a head of Christ in the fashion of a tonsured master with hood removed. In the fourth, let there be two heads of the glorious Virgin, one old and the other young, joined together back to back. In the fifth, let there be a head of God in the fashion of an old man with a long beard. In the sixth, let there be a head of Christ in the fashion of a king crowned with a gold crown. In the seventh, let there be a head of Christ in the fashion of an armed soldier and crowned with a gold diadem.⁵³

The images are odd, but it is possible to guess at which planets are here represented; the cherub with wings might be Mercury; the two feminine images could correspond to the moon and Venus, perhaps; the tonsured master might be Saturn; the old man with the beard and king with a gold crown could represent the Jupiter and the sun, respectively; Christ as an armed soldier might be Mars. But even while the figures are quirky, the one thing that does seem clear about these representations is that they are meant to be Christian; they cut monkish figures where they are not explicitly mapped onto aspects of Mary, Christ, or God the father. They are, in this sense, quite legible, despite their quiriness, and carry forward the penitential and sacramental themes and qualities embodied, unmistakably if idiosyncratically, throughout John's work.

At present I cannot offer any real answer to the question of where John derived the ideas for these images. Certainly they do not match up to any kind of illustration in any *Ars notoria* manuscript that I have ever seen. Do they resemble necromantic images of either deliberately demonic or benign

53. *Ymaginaciones planetarum*. In prima, fiat capud cherubin cum alis. In secunda, fiat capud femineum, coronatum diademate aureo. In tercia, fiat capud Christi ad modum magistri tonsorati cum capucio remoto. In quarta, fiant capita Virginis gloriose duo, vnum antiquum et alterum iuvene, simul iuncta tergum contra tergum. In quinta, fiat capud Dei ad modum hominis senioris cum barba proluxa. In sexta, fiat caput Christi ad modum regis aurea corona coronatum. In septima, fiat capud Christi ad modum unius militis armati et aureo diademate coronati. *Ymaginaciones omnium aliarum figurarum* quales debent esse inferius manifesta<n>tur. Et est notandum quod in solis figuris duodecim signorum sunt mixta nomina sillabarum. In omnibus aliis litteratim. Et nota quod in spacia in qua fieri debent ista capita, si fuerint tanta ampla quod in eis tota ymago fieri possit, fiat. NE III. 26.b; fol. 67v in Bodleian Liturg. 160.

astrological sorts? Images of this latter kind are in somewhat short supply elsewhere, as Benedek Láng notes:

Paradoxically, what seems to be their main common characteristic, namely the use of images and the preference for using pictorial representations, cannot be employed as a *differentia specifica* of image magic. Visual elements play a rather important role in simple divinatory texts that have little to do with talismans, necromantic circles are typical elements in demonic magic, and notae—comprehensive charts representing the relations of notions and serving as tools for meditation—are extensively applied in the tradition of *Ars notoria*. Strangely enough, images seem to be less characteristic of works on image magic than of works in these other fields of magic.⁵⁴

Yet quirky human and humanoid images do exist in magic texts, of course; for example the text of the *Four Rings of Solomon* present in a sixteenth-century manuscript in London, British Library Sloane 3847, contains some human representations—crudely drawn male and female faces in circular designs also containing some divine names (fols. 69–70)—but these are not explicit planetary figures, nor are they Christianized (though the accompanying text is shy on details about exactly what they represent). Humanoid figures labeled as images of the planets occur in a set of striking illustrations of the planetary and decanic figures in *Picatrix* from a fifteenth-century manuscript in Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska 793.⁵⁵ This is the earliest copy of this text that is longer than a few folios, and the only known surviving version of *Picatrix* to bear illustrations.⁵⁶ The images show, for example, among several shapes for the image of Venus, a masculine figure with the head and feet of a bird (an eagle, according to the description);⁵⁷ one of the images for Jupiter shows a masculine figure with a lion's head and the feet of an eagle riding a dragon.⁵⁸ The same descriptions of figures, or ones very like them, turn up later as well, for example in Agrippa's descriptions of planetary images.⁵⁹ Yet these quirky and ambiguous forms are not Christianized, and none specifically resembles the images John describes; thus, this illustrated *Picatrix* can provide no more than an approximate analogue to the type of images that could have provided an inspiration for John's work.

54. Láng, *Unlocked Books*, 81.

55. See images reproduced in Láng, *Unlocked Books*, 99–102.

56. Láng, 96–97.

57. Lower left quadrant fol. 191v, BJ 793; Láng, fig. 12, p. 100

58. Ibid., lower left quadrant fol. 190r; Láng, fig. 11, p. 99.

59. *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, Book II, Part 3, chapters xxxviii–xlv.

CONCLUSION

While this is only a small sample of the nearly one hundred figures in John's Old Compilation, the way that John's planetary figures seem to imbue astrological images with Christian qualities here suggests that perhaps, just as the *Liber Orationum* (part II of the *Liber florum*) involves a resacralization of the *Notory art*, so in the Old Compilation *Liber Figurarum*, by including planetary and zodiacal representations among the images, and iterating planet names in the prayers, John is attempting to resacralize astrological elements that he had met elsewhere in the magical traditions familiar to him. The evidence I have pieced together here suggests that the categories of John's understanding, especially insofar as they are informed by the totalizing knowledge project of the *Ars notoria*, would have encouraged this.

I began this essay with John's visionary confession to owning a set of *libri nigromantici*, about which he felt profound compunction, but yet which he could not bring himself to destroy. We know, too, that he was authoring a *nova nigromantia* at the time he was compelled to give up his magical practices. It is possible that some of the more ambiguous magic known to John—magic not wholly natural, but not clearly or explicitly demonic either—found its way into the Old Compilation *Liber Figurarum* in a new form. Indeed it is otherwise rather difficult to account for his decision to make use of such an abundance of images, and the strong planetary presence in them. It is clear that knowledge categories within the “exceptive” arts would have been extremely difficult to eradicate from any ritual work that is aiming to reflect the integration of the self, the world, and the divine, as a single system. Throughout the *Liber florum*, we see John struggling with different ways of making all his knowledge and self-knowledge of a piece, consistent with what he knew from experience about the world and the divine.⁶⁰ The reabsorption of these varied kinds of magical knowledge into the Old Compilation *Liber Figurarum* must be seen—as John encourages us to see it—as a part of this attempt.

60. This article is based on a chapter of a book in progress that will deal more extensively with John's construction of identity and the interweaving of his various knowledge projects in the *Liber florum*. For their responses to the shape of this article, I would like to thank Richard Kieckhefer, Frank Klaassen, Sophie Page, and Nicholas Watson, who have all clarified my thinking and rescued me from numerous errors. Remaining errors are of course my own.